

**EPI Update for Friday, April 2, 2010**  
**Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology**  
**Iowa Department of Public Health**

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- ✍ **Are we seeing a true increase in *Campylobacter* cases?**
- ✍ **Enjoying holiday eggs safely**
- ✍ **Bearded dragons, frogs and disease**
- ✍ **H1N1 activity sustaining in the Southeast US**
- ✍ **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**Are we seeing a true increase in *Campylobacter* cases?**

Since November 2009, an unexpected and unexplainable increase has been reported in *Campylobacter* (campy) illnesses in Iowa. Between November 2009 and the end of January 2010, there was a >100 percent increase in reported *Campylobacter* infections.

Possible hypotheses include a: 1) actual increase in illness or 2) an increase in false positive tests due to the use of a new laboratory test approved in June 2009. This new test, a non-culture, lateral-flow monoclonal antibody immunoassay, is of concern because of a low positive predictive value (remember - predictive value is determined by the sensitivity and specificity of the test and the prevalence in the population).

UHL surveyed Iowa laboratories to determine how frequently this new test is being used. Of the 58 respondents, 47 test for the detection of *Campylobacter*, and of these 47 labs, 81 percent perform culture (the gold standard with respect to *Campylobacter* detection), 17 percent perform the new immunoassay test, and 2.5 percent perform EIA. UHL is planning to work with CDC and the Association of Public Health Laboratories to compare the four commercially available antigen-based tests to performing cultures. This project is expected to take place during the summer of 2010.

**Enjoying holiday eggs safely**

Eggs are often used as holiday decorations and in party activities (like egg hunts) during the Easter and Passover holidays. Here are some basic safety tips for cooking, handling and consuming eggs:

- ? **Cooking your holiday eggs**
  - ? When cooking, place a single layer of eggs in a saucepan.
  - ? Add water to at least one inch above the eggs.
  - ? Cover the pan, bring the water to a boil, and carefully remove the pan from the heat.
  - ? Let the eggs stand (18 minutes for extra large eggs, 15 minutes for large, 12 minutes for medium).
  - ? Run cold water over the eggs.
  - ? When the eggs are cool enough to handle, place them in an uncovered container in the refrigerator where they can air-dry.
- ? **Storing your holiday eggs**

- ? Keep hard-cooked holiday eggs refrigerated until just before use. Keep them fully chilled by storing them on a shelf inside the refrigerator, not in the refrigerator door.
- ? Decorating your holiday eggs
  - ? Consider buying different eggs for decorating and eating.
  - ? When decorating, be sure to use food-grade dyes; you can use commercial egg dyes, liquid food coloring, or fruit-drink powders.
- ? Eating holiday eggs, such as those used for Easter egg hunts
  - ? Hide the eggs in places that are protected from dirt, pets and other potential sources of bacteria.
  - ? To prevent bacterial growth, don't let eggs sit in hiding places for more than two hours.
  - ? Throw away eggs that were cracked, dirty or not found within two hours.
  - ? Immediately place the eggs back in the refrigerator until it's time to eat!

For more information, visit [www.fsis.usda.gov/news/NR\\_032105\\_01/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/news/NR_032105_01/index.asp)

### **Bearded dragons, frogs and disease**

Our friends to the north at the Minnesota Department of Health remind us of salmonella risk in reptiles and amphibians:

In December of 2009 a rare type of *Salmonella* was found in three young people who had attended a potluck associated with a foodborne outbreak. The food implicated in the outbreak was prepared by someone keeping bearded dragons in their home. The serotype of *Salmonella* found in these reptiles matched exactly with the serotype found in ill people.

In January, the CDC reported a multi-state outbreak of *Salmonella typhimurium* associated with frogs, especially those kept as pets in homes. So far in this outbreak there have been 111 cases found in 31 states in the US. In these cases, exposure to the water kept in the frogs' aquariums has been linked to human disease.

It appears people may buy frogs as an alternative to pet turtles because of concern over salmonellosis. Public education regarding the risk for illness associated with turtles and other reptiles should be expanded to include the risk from pet frogs and other amphibians. Children aged less than 5 years old might be less likely to consistently practice proper hand hygiene, so prevention and control measures should be emphasized for this age group.

For more information, visit [www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/newsletters/bugbytes/1002bb.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/newsletters/bugbytes/1002bb.html)

### **H1N1 activity sustaining in the Southeast US**

Influenza activity continues at regional or local levels in states including Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama. The rest of the nation, including Iowa, is reporting only sporadic

activity. Northwestern states are starting to move into 'no activity,' even though all states continue heightened surveillance efforts. Sustained activity in the Southeast is attributed to low vaccination rates in the general population. Georgia has the lowest vaccination rates among children in the country. Immunization with H1N1 vaccine continues to be recommended.

The Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network will survey for influenza activity year-round, though some programs will be scaled back if activity remains low. Condensed weekly reports will be available throughout the summer at [www.idph.state.ia.us/IdphArchive/Archive.aspx?channel=FluReports](http://www.idph.state.ia.us/IdphArchive/Archive.aspx?channel=FluReports).

### **Meeting announcements and training opportunities**

**Save the date:** The University of Iowa, Center for Agricultural Safety and Health, will be hosting agricultural medicine educational training in occupational and environmental health for rural health professionals at the Sheraton Iowa City hotel, 210 South Dubuque Street Iowa City, Iowa; June 7-11, 2010. For more info please visit [www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ICASH/programs/IA-Ag%20Med-Training-Brochure-2010.pdf](http://www.public-health.uiowa.edu/ICASH/programs/IA-Ag%20Med-Training-Brochure-2010.pdf)

### **Have a healthy and happy (and remarkably warm) week!**

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